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LD 2108

To the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

I am writing in support of LD 2108, which proposes the creation of a Suicide Mortality Review Panel. I believe Maine must do better at understanding why suicides occur and where systems fail, particularly in the areas of behavioral health access, crisis response, and continuity of care.

That said, I want to be clear that the success of this effort will depend entirely on how it is structured and governed.

Maine does not suffer from a lack of panels, task forces, or reports. What we suffer from is a lack of accountability, follow-through, and measurable outcomes. If this panel is simply another mechanism to collect data without producing actionable recommendations, or if it becomes insulated from public scrutiny, it will not meaningfully improve outcomes for families or communities.

If this panel moves forward, it should be required to:

- Clearly define its scope and purpose, with an emphasis on identifying system-level failures, not just individual circumstances.
- Include members with direct, practical experience in crisis response, rural service delivery, and behavioral health system navigation.
- Produce regular, public-facing reports that include specific findings and concrete recommendations, not just summaries.
- Be structured in a way that protects privacy while still allowing the public and policymakers to understand where breakdowns are occurring.
- Avoid duplicating existing reviews or becoming a passive advisory body without authority or impact.

I am particularly concerned that any findings related to state agencies or contracted service providers must be addressed transparently. A review panel that identifies problems but lacks a mechanism to ensure corrective action will only deepen public distrust.

LD 2108 has the potential to be a meaningful tool if it is built with accountability, independence, and a clear mandate for improvement. Without those elements, it risks becoming another well-intentioned effort that produces little change.

I urge the Committee to advance this bill only if it is structured to deliver real insight, real responsibility, and real results.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,
Colleen Brown
Whiting, Maine